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Report of the seventy-second meeting of the Standing Committee (19-21 June 2018)

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I. Introduction

1. The meeting was opened by the Second Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Geert Muylle (Belgium). Amb. Muylle welcomed Zimbabwe as the newest member of the Executive Committee.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The Committee adopted the agenda of the meeting (EC/69/SC/CRP.7).

III. International protection

3. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) introduced the item on international protection. He commended States for their constructive engagement in developing the global compact on refugees, highlighting the progress made thus far in applying the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF). He also outlined the efforts being undertaken to strengthen solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons, stressing the importance of partnerships in this regard.

A. Note on international protection

4. The Director of the Division of International Protection presented the note on international protection (EC/SC/CRP.9), underscoring the need for a better application of the principle and practice of burden- and responsibility-sharing, which was grounded in international law, and highlighting a number of ongoing challenges, including mixed movements.

5. Numerous delegations took the floor to convey support for the development of the global compact on refugees and for UNHCR's leadership of the process. Noting that 85 per cent of the world's refugees were being hosted by developing countries and emphasizing the need for more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, several delegations expressed the hope that the global compact would provide a new architecture for international cooperation. At the same time, some queried how the arrangements would translate into concrete commitments to fill the recurrent gap in the international response and ease the burden of host States. Partnerships, including with the private sector and development actors, were considered critical to these efforts. It was nevertheless noted that development funding for refugee responses should be considered additional and that it should not compromise the needs and priorities of the host State.

6. Member States underscored the importance of the "centrality of protection", which was at the core of the refugee compact. They underlined the primacy of the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, which constituted one of the fundamental pillars of the international protection regime. This must be fully respected, not only by maintaining open borders but also by refraining from efforts to circumvent this obligation. In future reports, UNHCR was encouraged to better cover the key protection issues of access to territory, detention and refugee status determination. UNHCR was also urged not to divert human or physical resources away from its core protection mandate activities, including in the context of the implementation of the refugee compact. In this regard, it was suggested that UNHCR introduce a separate reporting line to inform on progress made in relation to the refugee compact and the CRRF.

7. Delegations supported that a strong international protection approach be applied to admission, reception and identification. The use of the biometric identity management system (BIMS) was hailed as an important tool in supporting protection, targeted responses and solutions, as was the provision of identity documents in facilitating access to assistance and services. Credible and effective registration systems were essential to identifying those in need of protection.

8. With respect to the Sahrawi refugees living in the camps near Tindouf, one delegation referred to the financial gaps affecting the vulnerability of the population. It commended the updated data based on access to education and health care, which had facilitated collective actions and stressed the importance of allowing the population to exercise their right to return, in conformity with the United Nations peace plan. Another delegation underscored the need to register the population of the camps near Tindouf, Algeria in line with UNHCR's mandate, reports of the Secretary-General and recent Security Council resolutions. It also stressed the need to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum in the camps near Tindouf, as reflected in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as in Executive Committee conclusion no. 94 (LIII) of 2002.

9. Several countries expressed concern about the continuing heavy burden on refugee host countries and the unsustainable use of their scarce resources. Noting the environmental degradation caused by the large presence of refugees in some countries, the provision of alternative energy sources was important.

10. On mixed movements, UNHCR's efforts to address the situation in the Central Mediterranean route and in Libya were recognized. The detention of refugees and migrants in Libya was condemned, while support was expressed for Niger in establishing an evacuation mechanism. UNHCR's efforts to coordinate closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were welcomed. The Office was encouraged to further strengthen this in order to avoid duplicity and improve the response. Several States highlighted the need to ensure protection for women and children in mixed movements, particularly unaccompanied minors, including against violence, exploitation and trafficking. There was also a call for UNHCR to have unhindered access to arrivals in order to be able to identify those in need of international protection.

11. With respect to solutions, it was felt that this should be pursued with the same enthusiasm as protection. Protection and solutions were two sides of the same coin, and the latter should be the ultimate goal of protection. In this regard, delegations welcomed the creation of a Division of Resilience and Solutions. Several delegations emphasized the importance of voluntary repatriation as the most preferred solution. At the same time, UNHCR was urged not to take precipitous action on returns, which could create or exacerbate internal displacement. Returns were more likely to be sustainable if certain basic safeguards, such as legal rights, access to land, housing, social services and economic inclusion were in place. Providing refugees with information about the conditions in their country and places of origin was critical in enabling them to make informed decisions about return. UNHCR was encouraged to establish effective monitoring on the outcomes and impact of forced returns and returns to fragile post-conflict situations.

12. The Committee voiced its strong concern over the decrease in resettlement places. States were encouraged to expand their resettlement programmes, particularly for vulnerable persons (such as women at risk and victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and it was hoped that the refugee compact would provide new momentum in expanding resettlement opportunities and complementary pathways. Enhancing self-reliance, pending solutions, including through education, skills training and employment, was also important in reducing vulnerability and contributing to host countries. Regarding access to the labour market, just and favourable working conditions were critical.

13. The Director welcomed the expressions of support of the centrality of protection. However, she noted that this concept needed to be translated into operational realities that help persons of concern access their rights. On mixed movements, the Director highlighted the continued relevance of UNHCR's 10-Point Plan in Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, which provided good practices that could be applied in various contexts. In this regard, she noted that UNHCR was providing contributions on protection in mixed movements in the context of the development of the global compact on migration. Regarding resettlement, the Director echoed the calls for increased places to be made available. At the same time, she recalled the strategic value of even small programmes, when well targeted and used as a protection tool.

B. Update on UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons

14. The Special Adviser on Internal Displacement presented the update on UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons (EC/69/SC/CRP.9) and noted the need to develop a more decisive and predictable response to situations of internal displacement. He highlighted significant developments and challenges, including: strengthened inter-agency coordination; enhanced preparedness and early engagement in new or evolving situations; capacity-building for UNHCR staff; and quality data for better programming and collaboration with development actors. The Special Adviser further described UNHCR's efforts to prioritize protection and solutions in the inter-agency response and to support the development of a three-year multi-stakeholder plan of action to advance prevention, protection and solutions for IDPs in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GP20).

15. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's efforts to further engage with increasing numbers of IDPs worldwide. In particular, they commended the critical assessment of UNHCR's role and its work to strengthen inter-agency coordination. They recognized UNHCR's leadership in advancing the four priorities of the GP20, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), IOM and other stakeholders. With respect to UNHCR's internal operational review, delegations requested updates on progress in the implementation of recommendations. The revision of UNHCR's policy on internal displacement was welcomed, and States looked forward to the publication of the new policy by the end of 2018.

16. A number of delegations highlighted the need to focus on solutions from the outset of an internal displacement crisis. In this regard, they suggested applying the lessons learned from UNHCR's long-standing experience in refugee situations, further building the evidence base and involving development actors. They highlighted the need for more transparent and better quality data, and requested updates on the standard population data management package and its roll-out across UNHCR's operations. Several delegations inquired about the linkages between refugee and IDP responses and the accountability of senior managers to ensure they are established, particularly in situations of mixed populations. As the global protection cluster lead, UNHCR was urged to be inclusive of all stakeholders, including IDPs, and to work with Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams to support the development of country-level protection strategies. Delegations noted that integrated planning was critical to meeting needs and find lasting solutions, and encouraged UNHCR to promote national laws and policies in favour of IDPs, including on land, housing and property rights. The Committee emphasized the primary role of the concerned State in IDP situations and noted that national authorities should be supported through assistance and dialogue.

17. In response, the Special Adviser reiterated the importance of strengthening coordination and echoed the Committee's concerns on integrating solutions into early response to internal displacement situations. Regarding data, the Special Adviser took note of the need for increasingly interoperable data sets. He described the ongoing collaboration with the World Bank and the Joint Data Center in order to identify gaps and collect data. He thanked delegations for their support of UNHCR's work to update its policy on internal displacement. Consultations with partners on this policy were ongoing. On national and regional responses to internal displacement, he echoed the Committee's call for past initiatives, such as the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), to be taken into account in global efforts. With respect to the Division of Resilience and Solutions, he explained that solutions for IDPs would be mainstreamed within its structures. Responding to questions on the link between coordination structures and peace and security actors, the Director of the Division of Internal Protection described the Secretary-General's efforts to frame reform in the context of peace, security and prevention. She explained how the strategy for the protection of civilians was linked to the activities of the global protection clusters and committed to supporting such efforts.

C. Solutions: ending displacement and statelessness

18. The Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions introduced the agenda item by outlining the mandate of the recently-created division, which reflected the institutional affirmation of the Office's commitment to strengthen its efforts to achieve solutions. It will contribute to seeking a broad range of solutions for refugees, as well as reinforcing key areas of resilience, such as education and the creation of livelihood opportunities. The new division will also continue the work related to the application of the CRRF and support the global compact on refugees.

19. The Deputy Director, Comprehensive Responses of the division presented the paper: Solutions: ending displacement and statelessness (EC/69/SC/CRP.10), updating the Committee on the progress made and challenges encountered in the pursuit of solutions for refugees, internally displaced and stateless people. He gave an overview of the modest advances made in voluntary repatriation, noting that a significant number of returns took place to complex and hazardous situations. He noted that local integration was the main solution for refugees in developed countries and reiterated the need for expanding resettlement opportunities, as well as complementary pathways to protection and solutions. Some progress was made in finding solutions for stateless people and he lauded countries that enacted law reforms to help prevent statelessness. He also noted the need to develop an evidence base, including socioeconomic data, to improve policy development and resource allocation. With regard to resilience and self-reliance, the Deputy Director, informed delegates that UNHCR had widened its pool of partners, in particular for education. He highlighted the work being done with cities and the private sector.

20. Delegations welcomed the creation of the new division, the institutionalization of a comprehensive approach to solutions and the fostering of new partnerships, in particular with development actors. Many delegations also welcomed UNHCR's new process for multi-year, multi-partner planning to support refugees, IDPs and host communities and wanted to know how this would work in terms of budgeting and co-ordination. They also asked how this initiative related to the application of the CRRF and requested some concrete examples of results. One delegation noted that fostering self-reliance was an investment in solutions, notably sustainable voluntary repatriation, and could contribute to peace and stability.

21. Delegations recognized that these were challenging times for securing solutions, and UNHCR was encouraged to look into innovative complementary pathways and to quantify and track them, as it does with the three traditional durable solutions. Delegations emphasized the continuous importance of resettlement. Support was expressed for the stronger focus on finding solutions for IDPs, and one delegation asked if UNHCR would also work to integrate IDPs in local decision-making processes , and what budgetary and staffing arrangements the Office would make as a result of the new approach to solutions. One delegation expressed its support for finding local solutions for refugees.

22. The Deputy Director thanked delegations for their support and informed them that the multi-year, multi-partner initiative and the pursuit of solutions will be supported by the new integrated programme management service in the Division of Programme Support Management. There are currently 22 multi-year, multi-partner strategies in place and they continue in the 2019-2020 country operation planning process. In response to a question on the relation with the United Nations reform process, he briefed delegations on the informal dialogue with UN Resident Coordinators on the inclusion of refugees in national development plans. He gave some examples on the importance of working with local and municipal authorities in the context of the application of the CRRF. He reiterated the importance of education and referred delegations to the report on education for girls "Her turn". He confirmed that IDPs benefited from the same UNHCR approaches to protection and solutions as refugees. The Director of the Division for International Protection stressed that there were close, but clearly distinguished working relations between the two divisions and that the aim of protection is the attainment of solutions.

D. Oral update on the campaign to end statelessness

23. Presenting the oral update on the campaign to end statelessness, the Deputy Director covering policy and law in the Division of International Protection updated the Committee on ongoing efforts in the context of UNHCR's campaign to eradicate statelessness, progress made towards resolving situations of statelessness, including through reform of nationality laws and regional commitments, and underscored the importance of working in partnership to meet the campaign goals. She also described how partnerships were crucial in preparations for the high-level event on statelessness, which will mark the mid-point point in the campaign in October 2019.

24. Delegations commended UNHCR for its ongoing activities to eradicate statelessness and welcomed progress achieved. National and regional initiatives were praised, as was the increased recognition of statelessness as an important humanitarian, human rights and development issue. States also expressed support for the inclusion of statelessness in the global compact on refugees with a view to preventing statelessness in forced displacement situations, including through improved access to civil registration and documentation. The Office was urged to continue strengthening cooperation with relevant human rights mechanisms and support the implementation of the 2030 agenda on sustainable development. In addition, UNHCR was called upon to provide more information on its work with the Joint Data Center to collect and manage data on the risks and vulnerabilities of stateless persons. Member States were encouraged to bolster efforts to achieve the ten actions set out in UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness and engage in the process leading to the high-level event on statelessness. UNHCR was requested to keep Member States informed of preparations in this regard.

25. The Deputy Director thanked the Committee for its support and took note of its call for enhanced strategic partnerships at the regional level. With respect to collaboration with the Joint Data Center, she explained that data collection could also explore the linkages between poverty and statelessness. Regarding the number of situations where people acquired nationality or had their nationality confirmed in 2017, she noted that this progress had been achieved in a total of 29 situations. Responding to a question on UNHCR's assessment of the impact that the campaign has had, she highlighted the fact that law reforms usually take several years and that one of the challenges in this regard is limited capacity and knowledge of good practices at the national level. The Deputy Director underscored the value of preparatory meetings leading up to the high-level event on statelessness to overcome such challenges, and to conclude, the Senior Legal Coordinator (Statelessness) described positives developments at the Human Rights Council and Universal Periodic Review due to increasing attention devoted to statelessness issues.

IV. Update on age, gender and diversity

26. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection presented the Update on age, gender and diversity (EC/69/SC/CRP.11) and outlined the changes contained in the updated policy compared to the previous version, and what it aims to achieve.

27. Numerous delegations took the floor to commend UNHCR on the updated policy and in particular the commitment of the Office to focus on gender equality. The Office was requested to provide regular updates, including on the concrete steps taken to implement the policy. More detailed information on data disaggregation and particularly what is meant by "other diversity factors" was also requested. UNHCR was further urged to more specifically consider the needs of disabled people, adolescent girls, as well as boys and men, in its humanitarian response and programming. Education, health care for girls, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and prevention and response to SGBV were highlighted as important issues to be considered in basic needs interventions. While great strides had been made in addressing and preventing SGBV, more had to be done to ensure that the most vulnerable populations, including women and girls, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, were protected. The Committee requested more information about how and when age, gender and diversity (AGD) disaggregated data will be incorporated into the new results-based management (PBM) system.

28. The Senior Protection Coordinator informed the Committee that an implementation plan had been drafted that set out the necessary steps in terms of strategic action, operational support, monitoring and reporting. A task team had been created to oversee implementation and to ensure that operations have the necessary guidance, training and tools to support implementation. The Senior Protection Coordinator further noted that data disaggregation provided valuable information for promoting gender equality in humanitarian action and that a lack of such information could lead to protection shortcomings.

29. The Deputy Director acknowledged delegations' emphasis on the importance of gender equality and of women being the main recipients of assistance. This also required complementary programmes with a focus on enabling equal decision-making in households, including financial literacy activities and gender dialogues, ensuring that male family members were not left behind. The approach had already been tried in the United Republic of Tanzania. With regard to child protection and youth, the Deputy Director highlighted the participation of the Global Youth Advisory Council, which had contributed to the CRRF and the global compact on refugees. Youth initiatives have also been implemented in the field and led to ground-breaking work, particularly in the area of gender equality and in response to SGBV and other risks to children and youth. The Deputy Director outlined the work that had been done to develop a policy on SGBV prevention, mitigation and response and noted that consultations were still ongoing with a wide range of stakeholders on referral and feedback mechanisms. With regard to disability, she thanked the Committee for its support and noted that UNHCR joined up with UNICEF to share expertise and to work on joint projects to further strengthen the mainstreaming of the response to people of concern with disabilities. Education was highlighted as a core component of the AGD policy, in particular with regard to the enrolment and retention of girls.

30. The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection thanked the delegations for the constructive protection debate. He noted that age, gender and diversity does not only have an internal dimension to UNHCR, but that the successful implementation of this policy also depended on how governments conducted their own programmes. He highlighted the importance of a strong focus on the gender dimension of protection and child protection, as well as the identification of people with disabilities, those belonging to minorities, older people to be able to respond to their specific needs. He reiterated the Office's commitment to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment as part of its values. He stressed the importance of respect for international humanitarian law, which spoke directly to the causes of displacement and standards of treatment. These were informed by a single refugee concept crafted over the last 70 years. He reminded delegations that UNHCR had a supervisory responsibility according to its statute, the 1951 refugee convention and its 1967 protocol. Therefore, the Office is duty-bound to share its interpretation of international refugee law with Member States.

V. Update on the comprehensive refugee response framework

31. The Deputy Director for Comprehensive Responses in the Division of Resilience and Solutions presented the update on the CRRF (EC/69/SC/CRP.13), focusing on the lessons learned in its application thus far.

32. The Committee commended the progress made by those countries and regions applying the CRRF and hoped that it could be rolled out in all major refugee situations, including outside Africa and Central America, as well as in mixed movements. They applauded in particular the strong government leadership demonstrated by all the CRRF countries and highlighted the importance of national ownership. At the same time, some queried how implementation could be sustained in a situation where such leadership and ownership were dwindling. Others drew attention to the impressive efforts of countries that were undertaking activities that were in line with the CRRF but which were not officially applying it. In this regard, important lessons could be drawn from non-pilot countries, including in the Asia and Pacific region.

33. The importance of regional cooperation in generating positive outcomes was emphasized, as demonstrated by the Brazil Plan of Action and the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (known by its Spanish acronym as MIRPS) in Latin America, both of which provided good practice examples, including at the global level. It was noted that those countries participating in the MIRPS had already undergone significant legal and policy changes and some thirty projects at the national and subregional level were being implemented. National road maps and regional results frameworks, with clear linkages to the sustainable development goals (SDGs), were also useful in determining broad targets and increasing mutual accountability for reaching them. Furthermore, it was suggested that strong metrics be developed to monitor and evaluate progress and outcomes, including the concrete impact on the lives of refugees and host communities. A stronger alignment was also needed between the CRRF and other relevant processes, including regional refugee response frameworks.

34. Delegations were pleased that the "whole-of society" approach was succeeding in expanding the base of cooperation and that national arrangements included the participation of a wide range of partners, including United Nations agencies, civil society, development actors and refugees and host community representatives. Refugee participation and that of host communities was deemed particularly important. The increasing engagement of development actors in refugee responses was a positive sign and was beginning to bear additional resources. However, some queried whether there were good practice examples in the swift and flexible release of development funds for refugee situations. It was also noted that, beyond additional humanitarian and development financing, political leadership was also key in driving agreement on basic principles and improved policy coordination.

35. Challenges in the implementation of the CRRF thus far included: the lack of humanitarian and development financing, which was critically required to comprehensively respond to the needs of refugees and support host communities; reduced opportunities for third country solutions; and the absence of improvement in the conditions for return in countries of origin. It was hoped that the refugee compact would deliver a better balance between national efforts and international support. Numerous countries urged UNHCR to report on such challenges and difficulties, in order to provide a more balanced analysis, in future updates. Given that UNHCR would need to continue acting as a catalyst, the organization was asked about the institutional changes it would need to make in order to adapt to the CRRF, including the development of new skills sets, fundraising, planning and budgeting.

36. The Deputy Director for Comprehensive Responses thanked delegations for their financial, technical and political support for the roll out of the CRRF. He noted that the CRRF was built on decades of experience and good practices, but that, nevertheless, a lot of lessons had been learned since it was first rolled out in Uganda. Responding to a question in this regard, he noted that the newest countries applying the CRRF had gained from the experiences of the others. He acknowledged the numerous comments regarding the need to report on the challenges being faced and indicated that UNHCR would include this in the more comprehensive report on the rollout of the CRRF which it hoped to release soon. In this regard, it was important to hear from the countries themselves on the main challenges they were facing, though clearly one of them was in relation to the need for additional and predictable financial support. Regarding lessons learned, he noted that the CRRF portal was an important platform and welcomed partners to make use of it. In response to a question on the role of regional entities, he noted their positive engagement in relation to the MIRPS and the durable solutions initiative for Somali refugees, as foreseen in the Nairobi Declaration.

VI. Programme/protection policy

A. Oral update on UNHCR's coordination efforts to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees

37. The Special Adviser to the High Commissioner on Development updated the Committee on the work carried out by UNHCR in response to the mandate given by A/Res/72/150 to coordinate efforts to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees. The Office reviewed objectives and approaches undertaken in the past to inform the way forward. It also conducted regular briefings and exchanges with Member States. He noted the challenges related to finding the right methodologies to measure the costs and benefits of hosting refugees, as well as the different contributions by host and donor countries. He also noted the important contributions of the World Bank and the Organisation Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and invited national statistics offices, in particular of refugee hosting countries to contribute their expertise. The next step will be for the High Commissioner to report on this subject in his annual report to the General Assembly, and for UNHCR to start convening the first technical meetings in September/October of this year. A comprehensive report on this subject will be presented in the second half of 2019.

38. Delegations welcomed the efforts made by UNHCR and underlined the importance of this exercise in reaching a more equitable and predictable way of sharing the burden and responsibility of hosting large numbers of refugees, in line with the New York Declaration and the global compact on refugees. Several delegations noted that the positive impact that the presence of refugees can have on the local economy should also be taken into account. One delegation asked how UNHCR planned to look at country-specific and regional-specific contexts. Delegations agreed that the process should be stated at expert level and welcomed the collaboration with the World Bank and the OECD in this regard and UNHCR was encouraged to reach out to the expert group established by the UN Statistical Commission. Several delegations expressed support for the reporting timeline proposed by UNHCR.

39. The Special Adviser thanked delegations for their expressions of support and recognized that the timeline had been shifting due to the complex nature of the exercise. He noted that it would not be possible to arrive at one formulae or methodology, in fact more than one methodology might need to be established and that this would be an ongoing process. He acknowledged the challenge of striking a balance between country- and region-specific situations and confirmed that UNHCR was in contact with the Expert group and was benefitting from their expertise. The Special Adviser outlined the next steps in collaboration with the World Bank and the OECD and concluded that the exercise had a good base, but that much worked remained to be done.

B. Report on UNHCR's global strategic priorities

40. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) introduced the update on the global strategic priorities (EC/69/SC/CRP.12), informing the Committee of the progress UNHCR made against the 2016-2017 global strategic priorities in the second year of the biennium. He noted that the management of these priorities was a dynamic process and further highlighted challenges in achieving progress in the second year, in particular when new emergencies arose. He also updated the delegations on the global strategic priorities for the 2018-2019 biennium and a number of changes that were introduced in the support and management priorities. These changes aimed to take forward the High Commissioner's vision as set out in the UNHCR's strategic directions and allow the Office to report on its "grand bargain" commitments.

41. Delegations thanked UNHCR for the update and the 2017 progress report on the global strategic priorities and asked that the latter be made available at the same time as the conference room paper. They urged UNHCR to align the global strategic priorities with the revision of the RBM framework, in particular the indicators, and to strengthen the way it measures impact, clearly indicating the relative scale of success. One delegation called on UNHCR to establish more precise and ambitious indicators. UNHCR was requested to provide more information about how the different management initiatives, such as the global strategic priorities and the revision of the RBM framework, related to each other and to other initiatives, such as the application of the CRRF, the global compact on refugees,

the "grand bargain" and the reforms in the UN development system. In particular, they stressed the need for improved joint needs assessments and reduced duplication and management costs. They also sought clarification on the ways in which global strategic priorities related to the design of global programmes and overall appeal amounts. Delegations noted a lack in progress in tackling malnutrition and durable solutions, and urged the Office to describe challenges encountered when prioritizing activities.

42. UNHCR was congratulated for implementing standing operating procedures to prevent and respond to SGBV and was asked about the timeline for the roll-out of the inter-agency gender-based violence information management system in more operations. More information on mechanisms that promote accountability to affected populations at UNHCR and among partners was also requested. One delegation asked UNHCR to report to the Executive Committee on relevant efforts, in line with the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/72/751).

43. The Director thanked the delegations for their contributions and noted that the operational and policy environment in which UNHCR operated had shifted significantly since the global strategic priorities were first established. He noted that the experiences in the application of the CRRF would have an impact on the global strategic priorities and that the revision of the Office's RBM framework would take into account the new initiatives underway, including the UN reforms. The Director of the Division of International Protection confirmed that the gender-based violence information management system would be rolled out in all operations.

VII. Programme budgets and funding

A. Update on budgets and funding for 2018 and reporting on 2017

44. The Deputy High Commissioner provided an overview of key figures and issues under the agenda item, including updates regarding the changes afoot within UNHCR.

45. The Controller and Director of the Division of Finance and Administrative Management (DFAM) and the Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) presented the update on budgets and funding (EC/69/SC/CRP.14). The Controller reported on the final financial results for 2017 and provided an overview of the requirements as of 20 June 2018. The Director of the DER complemented the presentation with details on trends in voluntary contributions and funding levels and highlighted innovative communication initiatives.

46. The Committee expressed concern regarding the challenges UNHCR was facing in addressing the growing needs of persons of concern with an ongoing funding shortfall. Delegations noted that despite more funds being available in 2017, the funding gap still increased compared to 2016. They encouraged UNHCR to further strengthen its support base, including through the engagement of development actors and the private sector. In order to increase efficiency, it was recommended that the Office paid attention to the prioritization of resources and focused its efforts on improving coordination and MYMP programming. One delegation requested a discussion on the benefits and challenges of the needs-based budget. In relation to the "grand bargain" commitments, delegations stressed the need for more unearmarked funding and commended the Office for having included tables showing the breakdown of unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions. The increase of expenditure in the field was positively noted and UNHCR was requested to periodically report on its prioritization, financial savings and efficiencies gained by the implementation of various reforms.

47. The Controller responded to specific questions relating to the budget and began by noting that there had been no new supplementary budgets issued since 30 April. With regard to a question on additional financing to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse, he explained that additional capacity was provided to the Division of Human Resources Management, the Staff Health and Welfare Service, the Global Learning Centre, the Legal

Affairs Service, the Inspector General's Office, and the Ethics Office to accelerate UNHCR prevention and response activities. This included the appointment of a senior coordinator and establishment of an emergency task force supported by working groups to ensure that reporting mechanisms were accessible. Expenditure relating to change management ensured the temporary capacity for the reorganization of Headquarters, i.e. establishing the new division, as well as programme management consolidation, regionalization and decentralization. With regard to a question about the significant budget increase for East and Horn of Africa in 2017, the Controller explained that this was related to two situations: South Sudan and Somalia mainly due to an increase in people of concern to UNHCR in both situations.

48. The Controller informed the Committee that UNHCR was currently finalizing a review of the MYMP initiative and that the preliminary recommendations indicated that before UNHCR pursued a full institutionalization of this approach, it needed to ensure that the right tools and guidance were in place. He also noted that the initiative would be developed in conjunction with some other important initiatives currently underway, notably the CRRF and the revision of the RBM system. On multi-year transfers to partners, the Deputy Director responded that UNHCR disbursed $1.5 billion to some 1,000 different partners, but that current levels of multi-year funding were not sufficient for the Office to transfer to partners.

49. The Director of DER thanked delegations for their strong support of unearmarked and multi-year funding and highlighted the report on the use of unearmarked funding distributed during the meeting and updates in the global focus website. She outlined UNHCR efforts to reduce the funding gap with innovative communication, such as the "Searching for Syria" website together with Google and others, in order to reach a wider public and broaden the funding base. In response to the question on coordination, the Director explained that UNHCR was committed to ensuring that its interventions were effective and that money was well spent. The Office would continue to support OCHA's role in humanitarian interventions and noted that donor action should also facilitate coordination. With regard to a question on the prioritization of needs, the Director noted that UNHCR has developed sophisticated tools to determine where to prioritize its assistance efforts. For longer-term assistance, cash-based interventions could be appropriate. However, these interventions are often linked to national safety nets and systems, which were not always available in the countries where UNHCR operates. The Director noted that UNHCR was committed to increase cash-based interventions for persons with specific needs and in relation to education, SGBV and child protection. She concluded by affirming that UNHCR was committed to using cash whenever possible, and mentioned that $500 million had been delivered, in 42 operations, in 2017.

50. In response to a question regarding supplementary budgets, the Deputy High Commissioner replied that there were currently no new ones on the horizon. She noted that UNHCR would do its best to prioritize within the existing envelope before turning to donors for additional funding. Referring to the conversation regarding resource-based budget versus needs-based budget, the Deputy High Commissioner mentioned that it could begin during the Informal Consultative Meeting in July, although she cautioned the Committee with regard to any budgetary structure changes due to the major changes taking place within UNHCR at this time.

51. The Committee adopted the decision on budgets and funding for 2018, as contained in the annex to the present document.

B. Global Report 2017

52. The Director of DER presented UNHCR's Global Report on activities in 2017, noting that it contained detailed information on voluntary contributions as well as regional summaries. For more detailed information on UNHCR's overall achievements and challenges, the Committee was invited to consult the Global Focus website.

53. Delegations commended the Office for its efforts to provide the Committee with a useful report which contributed to building donor confidence and helped make the case for providing flexible funding for UNHCR's operations. UNHCR was commended on the detailed reporting on the programmes, reforms, and initiatives undertaken in 2017. The growing emphasis on diverse partnerships to fulfil protection goals and achieve durable solutions was noted. In line with comprehensive responses, UNHCR's efforts to call upon a diverse set of partners was seen as a promising and critical trend.

54. Delegations expressed concern about the serious misconduct in the aid sector, including in non-governmental and UN organizations. The Committee appreciated actions taken thus far by UNHCR to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, but also stressed the need for a cultural change to ensure a safe environment for reporting of any cases of exploitation, abuse or harassment and to hold perpetrators to account. The serious attention by the High Commissioner to this was welcomed and there was general consensus on the need for regular updates on these issues to help increase transparency and accountability.

55. The Director of DER thanked delegations for their positive response to the 2017 Global Report, noting that UNHCR tried to improve the publication every year. Regarding the statements made on sexual exploitation and abuse, the Director noted that there is an absolute commitment across the Office to address these issues.

56. The Deputy High Commissioner added that UNHCR worked hard to create an environment which encouraged survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse to come forward. The growing number of reported allegations proved that there was an increase in trust in the system. She listed measures taken by UNHCR to further strengthen this trust, including creating a system for survivors to access an independent hotline, simplifying complaints procedures and, setting up a broader range of channels for feedback, increasing psychosocial medical support and guidance; updating the policy on retaliation; fast-tracking sexual misconduct cases with trained investigators; and taking a series of measures to ensure that perpetrators do not move within system. The Deputy High Commissioner noted that tackling sexual exploitation and abuse had forced UNHCR to reflect on its values and attitudes, and to make changes in the organization and respond in the most sensitive way possible.

VIII. Governance

57. The Chairperson reminded the Committee that the High Commissioner's opening statement at the sixty-ninth annual plenary session of the Executive Committee would form the basis of the general debate. She invited delegations to propose topics, noting that suggestions could also be transmitted to the Secretariat in writing in the weeks following the meeting.

58. Delegations asked the High Commissioner to share his views on the consultations on the global compact on refugees. In particular, they expressed interest in hearing more about the disparity between developed and developing countries, and the impact that hosting refugees has on providing quality protection and rising inequalities in the long term. It was noted that such inequalities need to be addressed as it can lead to increased forced displacement across the world. It was also proposed that the High Commissioner speak about new solutions initiatives for refugees, especially those living in protracted situations.

IX. Any other business

59. In line with the practice of adopting the reports of the Standing Committee meetings through an electronic circulation process, the Chairperson indicated that the report on the seventy-second meeting would be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated for comments by 12 July 2018. Following a two-week review period, any comments or corrections from Member States in relation to their interventions would be incorporated, and the report

would be subsequently recirculated and considered adopted. She also reminded delegations of their invitation to attend the sixth and final round of formal consultations on the global compact on refugees on 3 and 4 July 2018.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2017 and 2018

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision[*], at its sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1154, para. 13 (c), A/AC.96/1165, para. 15 (3) and A/AC.96/1176 para. 14 (3)), as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the seventy-first meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2018,

Reaffirming the importance of responsibility-sharing in solidarity with countries hosting refugees,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-sixth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2016-2017 biennial programme budget, amounting to $6,408.5 million for 2017,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-seventh session, approved revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2016-2017 biennial programme budget (revised), amounting to $7,309.7 million for 2017,

Notes that the 2017 supplementary budgets amounted to $832.1 million for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons,

Notes the budget reduction of $178.9 million in 2017,

Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2017 to a final total of $7,962.9 million, representing the sum of the revised budget of $7,309.7 million and the total supplementary budgets of $832.1 million, as well as a budget reduction of $178.9 million,

Takes note of the financial and budgetary performance in 2017,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-eight session, approved programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2018-2019 biennial programme budget, amounting to $7,508.4 million for 2018,

Notes that the supplementary budgets for 2018, which amount to $766.9 million as at 30 April 2018 are for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons,

Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2018 to a current total of $8,275.3 million as at 30 April 2018, representing the sum of the original budget of $7,508.4 million and the supplementary budgets of $766.9 million,

Recognizes that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2018 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be required to meet such needs, and

Urges Member States to continue to respond generously, in the spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the annual budget for 2018.

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Item 4 of the agenda
Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee

Report of the seventy-third meeting of the Standing Committee (19-20 September 2018)

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Suraya DALIL (Afghanistan), chaired the meeting.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The agenda for the meeting (EC/69/SC/CRP.16) was adopted.

III. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

3. The Deputy High Commissioner provided an overview of key issues related to management, including "duty of care" in high-risk situations, efforts to prevent and address sexual misconduct, risk management, oversight, and budgets and funding. She updated the Committee on UNHCR's change process, which sought to ensure that the organization strengthened efficiency, transparency and accountability; engaged with a broad spectrum of partners, particularly development actors, to foster solutions; and aligned itself with system-wide reforms and initiatives. In 2019, the Office was focusing on strengthening internal coherence, including measures to ensure greater field support provided by Headquarters. A regionalization and decentralization plan was also being developed, which would strengthen operations and decision-making in the field.

A. Finance and oversight

(i) Report of the Board of Auditors

4. UNHCR's financial statements for 2017, as contained in the report of the Board of Auditors (A/AC.96/1179 and A/73/5/Add.6), were presented jointly by the Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, and the Deputy Director of External Audit Germany. The Controller noted that UNHCR had received an unqualified audit opinion, with confirmation that UNHCR's financial position remained strong and that there were sufficient assets to meet the liabilities. He briefed the Committee on the main recommendations made by the Board and the key measures taken in response (A/AC.96/1179/Add.1), including to recommendations from previous years.

5. The Deputy Director of External Audit Germany noted that this was the first time that UNHCR's external auditor briefed the Committee directly, which was a good measure in terms of increased transparency beyond consideration of the Board's report by the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the General Assembly's Fifth Committee. With respect to the unqualified audit opinion, this was very positive but did not mean there was no room for improvement. With this in mind, the Board had made 49 new recommendations. Most of them concerned the administration and management of UNHCR's operations and focused on five areas: 1) fraud and corruption, 2) cash-based interventions (CBIs), 3) the use of individual consultants, 4) supply chain management, and 5) engagement in the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The latter was considered a key issue for the Board, and every organization's engagement in the SDGs had been examined with a view to strengthening commitments across the United Nations system.

6. Delegations noted with concern that 40 per cent of the recommendations from the previous year remained open, and UNHCR was urged to address these and all new recommendations in a timely manner. Appreciation was expressed for the detailed matrices provided, which allowed for tracking achievements and challenges in implementing the recommendations and provided greater transparency. In terms of financial management, UNHCR was urged to implement the additional controls recommended by the Board. Delegations took note of the challenges presented by earmarked funding and less than ideal predictability, affecting financial management, and called for this to be addressed by UNHCR's donors.

7. With respect to fraud and corruption, delegations noted that UNHCR operated in a high-risk environment but that it had good policies and systems in place for prevention and detection. Nevertheless, support was expressed for the Board's recommendation that UNHCR country operations strengthen risk assessment, including localized and customized anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategies. UNHCR was also advised to develop a clear control framework to strengthen its approach to fraud and risk management, which would help address some of the issues outlined in the report, including with respect to country-level fraud.

8. Regarding CBIs, UNHCR was encouraged to improve its monitoring, better measure the effectiveness of its training and ensure more consistent implementation in the field. It was also urged to work with partners on common policies and procedures, and concern was expressed over the fact that UNHCR did not track cash assistance distributed through partners. More broadly, numerous delegations highlighted the issue of partnership management, expressing concern that this was a systemic issue, which had also been identified by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). UNHCR was strongly urged to implement the relevant recommendations as a matter of priority.

9. The Office was encouraged to continuing exploring ways to work more cost-effectively with a "value for money" approach, in order to ensure optimal use of resources and funding. This included with respect to supply chain management. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's intention to review its work in the area of supply chain management and to further explore further collaboration with partners, which was consistent with the "grand bargain" commitments and the Secretary-General's reforms. With respect to individual consultant contracts, non-compliance with UNHCR's own policy was a cause for concern, as was the use of consultants to cover regular functions. Although support was expressed for the Office's engagement with SDGs, one delegation questioned the Board's recommendations, noting that UNHCR was a humanitarian agency.

10. In response to a question about the revision of UNHCR's results-based management (RBM) system and the timeline for implementation, the Deputy High Commissioner noted that the project had been put on hold. This was largely due to the rollout of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) and other factors related to change management and broader reforms in the United Nations, all of which required a recalibration to ensure that the RBM system was fully aligned. Once finalized, it was expected to achieve greater focus on outcomes and impact, with strengthened design and accountability in the field.

11. The Controller reiterated UNHCR's commitment to implementing the Board's recommendations, including from prior years. In response to concern about due diligence in the area of implementing partnership management, he outlined the selection process, the various controls that had been put in place over the years and UNHCR's work with several audit companies to strengthen oversight. He noted that this was a high-risk area, but assured the Committee that there were many checks and balances in place, including oversight by the Board of Auditors. He also described the various measures UNHCR was taking to deter fraud and corruption, reiterating that UNHCR took this issue very seriously. The Controller described UNHCR's efforts to increase efficiencies, including through the United Nations Innovation Network, and in the context of CBIs, gave examples of how UNHCR was working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to align approaches. The Deputy Director of External Audit Germany acknowledged the concerns raised regarding the SDGs but reiterated the importance of this overarching effort of the United Nations system and the need for UNHCR to formulate a position on its engagement.

(ii) Internal audit

12. The Chief of the UNHCR Audit Service of OIOS, presented the report on internal audit for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/AC.96/1181), noting that it did so with the sufficient resources required and with no interference that would have impeded its independence. He also highlighted the close and regular cooperation with UNHCR senior management and the Inspector General's Office (IGO). During the reporting period, OIOS conducted 28 audits and issued 133 recommendations, 11 of which were considered critical. There were also a number of recommendations that remained open from previous years, and OIOS had undertaken a review of two recurrent issues raised in past reports: 1) accounts payable, and 2) distribution of non-food

items (NFIs). In addition, OIOS had conducted two advisory engagements related to enterprise risk management (ERM) and a number of thematic audits, including on education grant entitlements, shelter programmes, registration and case management, and staff accommodation in the field.

13. Delegations appreciated the positive impact of the integration of the UNHCR Audit Service in the organization's overall oversight architecture and of the new interface with the IGO. While delegations welcomed the progress made in implementing many of the recommendations made by OIOS, it expressed concern about the number of outstanding ones, particularly those considered critical, and about several systemic issues that had been raised over and over again by the various control bodies. In this context, UNHCR was encouraged to consider providing matrices for follow-up purposes on the OIOS recommendations, just as it did for the Board of Auditors, which would highlight more than just the critical ones contained in the report. Alternatively, UNHCR could provide a consolidated matrix of issues coming from the audit and oversight bodies, given the overlapping issues. The two systemic issues which drew most attention were implementing partner management, and vendor management and procurement. UNHCR was urged to address the underlying causes of these issues as a matter of priority and to ensure that there were strong safeguards in place.

14. Responding to a question about the estimated completion dates, the Chief of the UNHCR Audit Service noted that the original dates set did not change. However, UNHCR was encouraged to provide new target dates when the original dates were not met. He also indicated that OIOS had strived over the years to make the recommendations less prescriptive and more flexible for management in terms of how to implement them.

15. The Deputy High Commissioner detailed the various levels of follow-up that were taking place, including at the highest levels of the organization, in order to implement the various recommendations but also acknowledged some of the complexities and challenges involved. She noted that the Inspector General had proposed that UNHCR undertake a "deep dive" to examine some of the recurrent issues. Other initiatives under way, such as risk management 2.0, would also help management follow up much more quickly on the implementation of recommendations. The Deputy High Commissioner briefed the Committee on a number of measures being taken to address the recommendations from some of the thematic audits. On staff accommodation, for example, UNHCR was preparing to issue a new administrative instruction which would respond to the recommendations. This would also be facilitated by the regionalization of various human resources functions. Regarding the status of UNHCR's registration software programme, proGres version 4, she noted that this had been rolled into PRIMES (Population Registration Identity Management EcoSystem), a new suite of interoperable registration, identity and case management tools. While the number of new rollout countries had increased in 2018, funding shortfalls had limited UNHCR's ability to implement it fully. The Controller informed the Committee that several recommendations which had been highlighted by delegations were already seeing progress made, with several being closed. This included one on local accounts receivable, on which UNHCR had issued a revised guidance note for field operations.

(iii) Report of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee

16. The outgoing Chairperson of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC) introduced the incoming Chairperson and informed delegations that three new members had taken up their functions in June 2018, replacing the members whose tenure had ended the month before. He presented the Committee's sixth annual report, covering the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (EC/69/SC/CRP.17), outlining the IAOC's review and recommendations with regard to: oversight and fraud prevention; UNHCR's internal control framework; ERM; change management; financial management; performance and accountability; organizational structures; and information technology processes.

17. Delegations concurred with the view that UNHCR had made progress in strengthening its oversight and risk management processes, as well as its evaluation and investigation capacities. However, they expressed concern about identified weaknesses with regards to accountability and supported the recommendation to strengthen UNHCR's internal control framework. UNHCR was encouraged to broaden its donor base to reduce the risks related to relying on only a few donors. Delegations also welcomed UNHCR's strategy and action plan to eliminate sexual exploitation

and abuse. With regard to fraud prevention, the Office was urged to adopt a more streamlined approach, and UNHCR was asked about the reasons behind the low participation of staff in the e-learning course on fraud prevention.

18. With regard to the recommendation for UNHCR to appoint a Senior Adviser on fraud prevention, the Chairperson explained that the IAOC felt it was necessary to strengthen the coordination of the different fraud prevention actions at the level of UNHCR's senior management. Responding to a question about the need for an adequate level of resources for the Inspector General's Office and a reasonable number of evaluations, the Chairperson responded that it was up to UNHCR to determine this, taking into account its objectives and available budget. He also noted that the Inspector General's Office had received additional staff and a budget increase for 2019. The Deputy High Commissioner clarified that additional resources would be needed to strengthen work in these areas, including to undertake more proactive investigations. She also noted that the e-learning course on fraud prevention was now mandatory for the entire workforce.

B. Risk management in UNHCR

19. UNHCR's Chief Risk Officer presented the paper on risk management (EC/69/SC/CRP.18), updating the Committee on the actions taken by UNHCR to strengthen the way it manages risk. The risk management 2.0 initiative, launched nearly one year ago, aimed to enhance the culture of risk management in operations and all areas of management. She presented the work plan for the coming three years, reiterated the commitment of UNHCR's senior management to achieving a strong risk management culture across the entire organization and highlighted the strong foundations already in place to achieve this.

20. Delegations expressed their support for UNHCR's efforts in this area and for the risk management 2.0 initiative in particular. While the additional capacity created in certain high-profile operations was appreciated, several delegations stressed the need for integrating risk reviews in the planning processes and day-to-day management. The importance of training for staff to embed risk management in the organization was highlighted. One delegation stressed the importance of having protocols and guidance in place on how to share critical risk information with partners and donors, when appropriate.

21. The Chief Risk Manager thanked delegations for their support. She agreed with the need to embed risk management in the organization and noted the need for a cultural change in this regard. She outlined some of the training initiatives that were underway, with the ultimate goal of strengthening the capacity of staff in all operations to better manage risks. She also confirmed that a risk review will be included in the planning instructions for 2019. The Deputy High Commissioner noted that risk management touched on everything that the organization did. In response to a question on registration, she announced that in follow up to a recommendation of OIOS, a consultant was hired to look at the registration process in general. Answering a question about the increase of the number of allegations, she responded that this was due to the fact that the complaint mechanisms now involved partners, not just UNHCR.

C. Human resources

(i) Human resources including staff welfare

22. The Director of the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) presented the paper on human resources, including staff welfare (EC/69/SC/CRP.19), providing an overview of UNHCR's workforce and the latest developments in this area. She briefed the Committee on the new administrative instruction on high-risk duty stations, the external review of human resources, finalized in March 2018, and the three-year road map that was adopted in response. The Committee was also updated on the new recruitment and assignments policy and the numerous initiatives taken to achieve gender parity, as well as a diverse, gender-balanced leadership pool, in line with the Secretary-General's reform agenda. Other efforts in the areas of performance management and staff accommodation were also presented.

23. The Committee commended UNHCR on efforts to achieve gender parity and welcomed the increase of international female staff appointed since the implementation of the new recruitment and assignments policy. While the increased diversity in UNHCR's workforce was noted, a few delegations expressed concern that some regions were still underrepresented and urged the organization to increase efforts to ensure geographical diversity. Delegations welcomed the strategy and concrete actions taken to address the issue of sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, in particular the high-level attention accorded to the issue and the zero tolerance policy adopted by the Office. The Committee asked for further clarifications regarding the role of the planned regional human resources teams and whether there would be any financial implications. In light of the CRRF and expected endorsement of the global compact on refugees, UNHCR was asked whether it foresaw the need for any new training and skill sets. The Committee requested more information about the factors under consideration for UNHCR's leadership competency framework aligned with the Secretary-General's reform efforts. The Office was also urged to make sure that staff serving in the field had access to adequate accommodation, as well as medical and psychosocial care, including on their return.

24. The Director ensured the Committee that UNHCR would continue to provide regular updates on the implementation of the recommendations from the human resources review. In terms of budget implications, this had already been included in the annual programme review and implementation would start in January 2019. She provided more details on the planned regionalization of human resources functions, noting that this would need to be aligned with the broader institutional decentralization efforts. She also highlighted that this would also have a positive impact on the efforts to achieve geographical balance in the work place, including through career outreach and talent identification, as well as on ensuring "duty of care". In this context, the Director described a number of initiatives to improve staff accommodation. Concerning gender equity among national staff, she explained that the high number of male drivers and staff in the fields of supply management and security had an adverse effect on the Office's efforts in this area. She also described UNHCR's work to strengthen performance management, career development and leadership, as well as a new initiative to improve workforce planning in response to developments such as the CRRF and the global compact on refugees.

(ii) Staff safety and security

25. The Director of the Division of Emergency, Safety and Supply (DESS) presented the paper on staff safety and security (EC/69/SC/CRP.20), summarizing the challenging security environment in which the organization operated. He also provided an update on the progress made in implementing UNHCR's security strategy, stressing the need to cooperate closely with governments and local communities, upon which UNHCR relied to ensure the safety of its workforce.

26. Delegations commended the commitment of UNHCR staff in the field and expressed concern over the high number of security incidents. It supported measures to mitigate the risks, in particular the organization's proactive approach through the security action plan. UNHCR was also congratulated for its efforts in ensuring compliance with the United Nations minimum operating security standards (MOSS). The Committee expressed appreciation for the special consideration given by UNHCR to addressing gender-based threats and training for staff in this area.

27. The Director expressed gratitude for the Committee's support and numerous recommendations put forward. In response to questions about trends in the risks faced, he noted while UNHCR evaluated security developments on a daily basis, predictions were difficult to make. The support of States and local communities was, however, a key factor in being able to address the risks. The Director also noted that UNHCR was planning to recruit a specialist on gender-related threats to better mainstream this issue in women's security awareness trainings. He also stressed the commitment to enhance gender and geographical diversity in hiring staff security personnel. The Head of the Field Security Service provided clarifications about the different types of security incidents faced and noted that the decrease in the number of casualties and deaths from security incidents indicated a return on the investments made in terms of risk mitigation. He also informed the Committee that UNHCR regularly shared security resources, including information and training, with partners.

IV. Programme budgets and funding

A. Update on budgets and funding

28. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, and the Director of the Division of External Relations jointly presented the update on budgets and funding for 2018 (EC/69/SC/CRP.21). The Controller noted that the initial figure of $7.5 billion approved by the Executive Committee in October 2017 had been revised to more than $8.2 billion as of mid-September. The upward adjustment resulted from the establishment of supplementary budgets amounting to $712 million to cover unforeseen needs in eight emergency situations. Since the issuance of the update on budgets and funding, there had been an increase of $503 million in voluntary contributions made available. However, the funding gap was still projected at 45 per cent by year-end. The Director of the Division of External Relations further described the funding situation, noting that there was a higher level of uncertainty in 2018 due to the timing of contributions. With the projected funds available for 2018, estimated to reach some $4 billion, approximately 55 per cent of the needs of persons of concerns would be met. The Director thanked donors for their generosity and stressed that flexible funding was key to responding to emergencies and chronically underfunded situations. He also took the opportunity to provide an update on UNHCR's involvement with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

29. The Committee expressed concern about the continuing gap between the budget and funding received and inquired about the measures being taken to address it. In particular, numerous delegations highlighted the chronic underfunding of the programmes in Africa, despite it having the largest proportion of persons of concern and pioneering the application of the CRRF. UNHCR was called upon to strengthen efforts to mobilize resources for the implementation of the CRRF, as this would help ensure outcomes were attained and encourage other countries to apply it. Disappointment was expressed over the lack of reduction in the per capita costs through efficiency gains, particularly in relation to the implementation of cash assistance and the "grand bargain" initiative. Donors were encouraged to increase their share of unearmarked contributions to provide greater flexibility in meeting the most urgent needs, in line with the "grand bargain" commitments. UNHCR was also urged to continue to broaden its donor base, including engagement with new and emerging donors, as the humanitarian donor landscape was not as diverse as it could be. With respect to development cooperation, States stressed how such forms of assistance should be additional to humanitarian assistance and should be focused on achieving national priorities. Delegations expressed support for UNHCR's progress in joining IATI.

30. One delegation expressed concern about the protracted situation of the Sahrawi refugees living in the five camps in Tindouf, Algeria, highlighting the suffering of the population in the absence of a durable solution. It commended the efforts made to assess the needs of the refugees and mobilize the necessary resources, and took note with appreciation of the findings of the UNHCR expert mission team to update the information concerning the vulnerabilities and needs of the Sahrawi refugees. It also stressed the importance of the right to voluntary return and noted that the registration of the Sahrawi refugees was directly linked to the implementation of the United Nations peace plan. Another delegation expressed concern about the refusal to register the refugee population in the Tindouf camps; reaffirmed that the central and essential character of registration and census of the population, consistent with UNHCR's protection mandate, was confirmed by numerous Executive Committee conclusions; and underscored the important link between registration and the evaluation of real needs. It pointed out that multiple diversions of aid had been confirmed by reports of international organizations. The delegation launched a new appeal for UNHCR to proceed with the registration, in accordance with its mandate for protection, assistance and durable solutions, and in conformity with relevant Security Council resolutions, highlighting that registration improved the integrity of UNHCR's interventions by diminishing the possibility of fraud and humanitarian aid diversion.

31. The Controller explained some of the financial considerations behind the reductions in pillar four - projects for internally displaced persons – which were related to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, and linked to a number of factors, including logistics and security constraints. He also spoke about UNHCR's efforts to ensure a more robust internal financial control framework, which required strengthened accountability for the organization as a

whole. Regarding the per capita costs, the explained the challenges involved but indicated that UNHCR was looking to manage down. The Director of the Division of External Relations explained that while the budget was increasing, it was important to keep in mind that displacement was growing at a much higher rate. She emphasized efforts to diversify the donor base and agreed that development funding should not be used to meet the humanitarian needs. Responding to a question about multi-year funding, the Director noted that the amount of such contributions remained small and tightly earmarked, which made assessing the benefits difficult.

32. The decision on budgets and funding for 2018, contained in annex VIII of EC/69/SC/CRP.21, was deferred.

B. Biennial programme budget for 2018-2019 (revised)

33. The Controller presented the revised biennial programme budget for 2018-2019 (A/AC.96/1180) and highlighted the key recommendations in the report of the ACABQ[1]. He provided an overview of the budget figures, including by region and by pillar, noting that the additional needs in 2018 had been mainstreamed into the revised budget for 2019. Trends related to budget, funds available and expenditure between 2010 and 2017 confirmed UNHCR's capacity to implement. He also highlighted that UNHCR had been able to more than halve its headquarters expenditure when compared to its total expenditure over the course of the past ten years

34. Delegations expressed appreciation for the informal consultative meetings on the budget in July and August, which provided an opportunity to discuss the details of the document. Nevertheless, UNHCR was urged to provide greater clarity on UNHCR's prioritization methodology and transparency with respect to how decisions were made. UNHCR was also urged to analyse the way in which it built its budget in order to find a better balance in terms of assessing overall needs, yet taking into account expected donor contributions and controlling costs. The Office was encouraged to continue to prioritize needs based on vulnerability and to ensure that the five core directions were taken into account (including with respect to engaging more decisively in situations of internal displacement). At the same time, UNHCR was cautioned against responding to the needs of a broader range of people as it could undermine the programmes that fall within its core mandate. States also highlighted the importance of outlining how new approaches, including the "grand bargain" and the CRRF, were reflected in the budget.

35. Responding to a question on the review of the 7 per cent programme support cost policy, the Controller outlined the criteria on which the policy was based and added that UNHCR would continue undertaking its review and be ready to share findings as early as 2019. With respect to the potential costs associated with an increase in allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, he explained that UNHCR prepared an "investing in integrity package" that outlined internal measures designed for such cases.

36. The Deputy High Commissioner took note of comments on the budget process and indicated that UNHCR would continue to keep the Committee abreast of the linkages with other initiatives as well as with UNHCR's change process. She also explained that country operations planning was an important pillar of building the budget and that the role of country operations would be strengthened with UNHCR's shift towards a regionalization approach. In response to questions about UNHCR's strategic directions and how these were reflected in the budget, she described UNHCR's commitment to engaging in the response to internal displacement and the internal transformation process to ensure UNHCR's workforce had the skills to work effectively in inter-agency coordination settings. She also highlighted efforts to prioritize situations as needs emerged and underscored the importance of unearmarked funding in this regard.

[1] The report of the ACABQ was provided to the Committee as an advance version and would be issued in due course as A/AC.96/1180/Add.1.

C. Private sector fundraising

37. The Head of the Private Sector Partnerships (PSP) Service presented the paper on private sector fundraising and partnerships (EC/69/SC/CRP.22) and gave an overview of the income growth to date. He noted that UNHCR had achieved strong income growth in the last 10 years and outlined how the organization planned to fulfil its ambitious target of obtaining $1 billion in private sector income by 2025.

38. Delegations congratulated UNHCR for the growth in private sector contributions and welcomed the efforts to bring down the cost of private sector fundraising to 25 per cent or below. They noted that the CRRF and the global compact on refugees presented an opportunity for UNHCR to involve the private sector. There was also a suggestion for UNHCR to explore collaboration with local companies in developing countries, especially with regard to investments, technology and innovation, and job-generating opportunities. The Committee queried what kind of policy was in place to ensure due diligence and to avoid potential conflicts of interest with private donors in order to minimize reputational and financial risks.

39. The Head of PSP thanked the Committee for its support and explained that UNHCR planned to bring the cost below 25 per cent through economies of scale related to market growth and by keeping headquarters' costs at a minimum. UNHCR would continue to report to the Committee on this issue. He informed the Committee that the main areas of strategic investment were related to digital and mobile communications, and analytics and profiling of donors. Face-to-face fundraising, which remained the most cost effective way to acquire regular donors and unearmarked donations in many countries, also required further investment. Regarding the CRRF and the global compact on refugees, he agreed that this had broadened UNHCR's scope with respect to engagement with the private sector. In response, an Operational Partnerships Unit had been established and would work closely with the Division of Resilience and Solutions.

40. The Head of PSP also spoke about a number of initiatives underway, including possible joint campaigns on underfunded situations and a cash assistance campaign. In terms of managing risks, he explained that UNHCR had a due diligence policy and that there was a committee chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner which was responsible for reviewing all partnerships involving contributions of more than $100,000. He also noted that UNHCR was supporting the development of a common due diligence policy within the United Nations system. The Director of the Division of External Relations also commented that UNHCR was seeing a shift from a social corporate responsibility approach to one that reflected a willingness to become strategic partners on innovative projects. She also noted that the role of the due diligence committee would be expanded to look at the strategic value of partnerships.

V. Coordination

A. Oral update on the comprehensive refugee response framework

41. The Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions presented the oral update on the CRRF, briefing the Committee on recent developments and progress made in its application in 15 countries across Africa, the Americas and Asia, as well as in the context of two regional situations. He highlighted the continuing importance of partnerships, particularly with development actors, as well as the identification of synergies with other efforts, including internal change processes, the SDGs and ongoing reforms of the United Nations more broadly.

42. Delegations welcomed the progress being made, with some calling for the CRRF to be applied to all major refugee situations. While the CRRF had mainly focused on host countries to date, the need to apply it to countries of origin in the pursuit of solutions was highlighted. In this context, Afghanistan's recent announcement to implement the CRRF for returnees was welcomed. The lessons learned from this situation would be valuable to other countries where returns were being pursued. Numerous delegations referred to UNHCR's crucial role as a catalyst and convener of various actors in support of the CRRF objectives. In this context, the Office was urged to be a "thought leader", particularly in ensuring the centrality of protection in all responses. While support for the "whole of society" approach was conveyed, the Committee noted that

significant work still needed to be done to educate a wide range of actors about what this concept meant and how they could contribute to it.

43. Despite the progress highlighted, some delegations highlighted a number of areas for improvement. One pointed to the need for strengthened government ownership across relevant line ministries; senior level engagement from host countries; long-term responses that focused on development initiatives, alongside humanitarian support; and for the right actors to be brought together at an early stage. Another indicated that multi-stakeholder engagement and proper coordination mechanisms were still lacking in most CRRF countries, and that international support was lagging behind.

44. Lessons learned should not only mean refinements and course corrections in the country concerned but should also lead to improved understandings shared across the CRRF network as a whole in terms of how to do things better and faster. While the continuous improvement of the CRRF portal and recent addition of the CRRF toolkit were welcome in this regard, regret was expressed that the CRRF Reference Group was no longer active. The importance of data collection and analysis was also highlighted. UNHCR was asked to ensure that donor countries were kept regularly informed and engaged at the country level, as they were ready to play supporting roles.

45. Looking ahead to implementation of the proposed global compact on refugees, some delegations referred to the need to make a shift from the CRRF rollout to a new global way of working. UNHCR was encouraged to define the criteria for the activation and deactivation of context-specific "support platforms", and a roadmap for implementation should be made available before the first global refugee forum in 2019. The platforms would help kick-start a CRRF-type response in the respective country or region. There was also a call for a strong monitoring and accountability framework to be established going forward.

46. The Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions commended the contributions of the CRRF rollout countries and noted how important it was to keep the momentum going. With respect to the way forward, he indicated that the CRRF would be absorbed into the global compact on refugees and would provide an important opportunity to see the approach expanded at the global level. At the same time, dedicated engagement with the rollout countries would need to be maintained. Responding to a question about the role of the new Division, he indicated that now was the moment for the organization as a whole to take ownership of the process and to ensure that UNHCR's work more broadly was in line with the CRRF objectives. He assured the Committee that UNHCR would continue to play a catalytic role in mobilizing the support required. The Director thanked the Committee for its support and promised to follow-up with interested delegations on the many proposals put forward.

B. Oral update on the grand bargain

47. The Director of the Division of External Relations presented the oral update on the "grand bargain", highlighting a number of key developments on the 10 workstreams. She noted the continuing value of the "grand bargain" as a unique platform through which donor governments, United Nations agencies and other partners could come together with the ultimate goal of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian aid.

48. Delegations welcomed the update and UNHCR's continued commitment to the "grand bargain". Nonetheless, some delegations expressed concern about the inconsistent progress among the participants. With regard to UNHCR, the Committee commended the organization on the progress made, including with respect to IATI. The participation of UNHCR in the pilot project for a common donor reporting framework, as well as the progress made on developing multi-year multi-partner strategies, building local partner capacities and creating efficiencies in partnership management alongside other United Nations agencies were also seen as positive steps forward. UNHCR was urged to continue working towards achieving the greater participation of women and girls in leadership and management structures, as well as in decision-making. The Office was also encouraged to ensure better quality reporting, particularly in demonstrating measurable progress on joint needs assessments, which underpinned prioritized response plans and appeals and which reduced duplication and management costs.

49. The Director acknowledged the request for stronger reporting on UNHCR efforts in implementing the "grand bargain" commitments. She outlined the different types of joint needs assessments that took place, depending on the context. Responding to questions about the use of cash, she noted that more than 64 per cent was multi-purpose and that CBIs represented a little over 15 per cent of UNHCR's overall assistance in 2017. She also spoke about the challenges involved with respect to earmarking, which affected UNHCR's fundraising strategy and appeals process.

VI. Any other business

50. The Senior Coordinator for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment provided an update on recent initiatives by the Office in this area. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's engagement and the progress achieved so far, including its efforts to ensure a system-wide approach. Responding to a question on a protocol for implementing partners, she described UNHCR's involvement in its drafting and work to enhance training, including at the field level. She noted that the increase in the number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were an indication of greater trust in UNHCR's ability to respond and reflected the increased level of engagement with partners. At the global level, joint investigations, involvement in inter-agency working groups and the development of a vetting and tracking tool within the United Nations system were major areas of UNHCR's work.

51. In line with previous practice, the Chairperson indicated that the draft report of the seventy third meeting of the Standing Committee would be circulated electronically by 25 September. Any comments or corrections from Member States in relation to their interventions should be submitted by 27 September. They would then be incorporated, as appropriate, and the report would be subsequently recirculated and considered adopted.